

**Testimony of Nikkole Emmerich
To the Program Review and Investigations Committee
Regarding the Study on the Department of Children and Families Services to
Prepare Youth Aging Out of State Care**

October 3, 2013

Senator Kissel, Representative Mushinsky and distinguished members of the Program Review and Investigations Committee, my name is Nikkole Emmerich. I am 24 years old and from Bridgeport, Connecticut. I am involved in Bridge House Inc. and Bridge House Inc. young adult program and Join Rise Be program for youth and young adults with mental health illnesses and disabilities.

I was under the care of DCF since I was young and until I reached the age of 18. I was in the Reach program in Bridgeport, Connecticut through DCF that didn't help me or my family with anything. The Reach program didn't help me and my family because they wanted things done their way. I was noncompliant with their treatment. I was put on one medication by my psychiatrist and the Reach program wanted me to go on another type of medication that I couldn't take due to my diabetes. The Reach program wanted me to be put on different medications that didn't work for me. DCF can offer more mental health services, education support services, job training support services, coping and communication skills support, and peer support programming and more community support and more community support groups for families and friends and information about services and self help advocacy resources.

My siblings are under the care of a DCF worker named Maureen who is very kind and understanding. I would like to see more Support groups for clients and friends and more support from DCF. I've know Maureen over a year now and she is understanding and offers a lot of support not just to my siblings but to me as well. Not many DCF workers offer the support that she does. I would like DCF to offer more support and services to family and friends of DCF clients.

Thank you for your time.